United Nations E/CN.18/2015/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 March 2015

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Eleventh session
New York, 4-15 May 2015
Items 3 (a), 3 (c) and 8 of the provisional agenda*

Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement on forests: reviewing the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and consideration of all future options; and reviewing the contribution of forests and the international arrangement on forests, including the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, to the internationally agreed development goals

High-level segment

Review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and consideration of all future options, including Secretary-General conclusions and recommendations

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

During the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, in May 2015, Member States will review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and decide on the future of the arrangement beyond 2015. The Forum will also include a high-level segment. The present report has been prepared to facilitate the discussions of Member States as they review the effectiveness of the current international arrangement on forests and decide on future arrangement beyond 2015. The report also provides a basis for the deliberations of Member States during the high-level segment of the eleventh session.

* E/CN.18/2015/1.

** Submission of the present report was delayed owing to the need for consultation with relevant departments of the Secretariat on budgetary and administrative aspects of the report.

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2007-2015, the overall theme of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in 2015 is "Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement on forests", encompassing three sub-themes: "Reviewing the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and consideration of all future options"; "Reviewing progress towards the achievement of the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests"; and "Reviewing the contribution of forests and the international arrangement on forests, including the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, to the internationally agreed development goals".[1] In addition, a high-level ministerial segment is planned to be convened during the Forum's eleventh session.[2]

2. The present report is to serve as the basis for discussions at the eleventh session of the Forum on agenda items 3 (a), 3 (c) and 8. Specifically, this report has been prepared to facilitate the work on reviewing the effectiveness of the current international arrangement on forests and deciding on the arrangement beyond 2015. The report also provides a basis for the deliberations of the senior officials of countries during the high-level segment of the eleventh session of the Forum.

3. To this end, the report includes an analysis of the achievements, weaknesses and strengths of and the areas for improvement in the current international arrangement on forests. The report also offers conclusions and recommendations on key components and aspects of the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015. In anticipation of the adoption of a ministerial declaration, this report also highlights some key areas for provision of political support by Member States during the high-level segment of the Forum's eleventh session.

4. As reflected in its conclusions and recommendations, the report takes into account the results of the intersessional activities of the Forum on the international arrangement on forests, developments in major ongoing global intergovernmental processes, and official documentation and reports prepared for the eleventh session.

II. Background

5. During the eleventh session of the Forum, in May 2015, Member States will review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and decide on the future of the arrangement beyond 2015. In preparation for this work, the Forum has, since its establishment by Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35, adopted several resolutions, including resolutions 7/1 (see E/2007/42 and Corr.1, chap. I.C) and 10/2 (see E/2013/42, chap. I.B); and has also recommended several draft resolutions for adoption by the Council (see, e.g., Council resolutions, including Council resolution 2006/49, in which the Council decided that the effectiveness of the arrangement would be reviewed in 2015).

6. In Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/49, the Council also decided that on the basis of the 2015 review, a full range of options would be considered,

[1] See resolution 7/1 of the United Nations Forum on Forests (E/2007/42, chap. I.C).

[2] See Forum resolution 7/1, annex, para. 1 (h).

including a legally binding instrument on all types of forests, strengthening the current arrangement, continuation of the current arrangement and other options. Further, in its resolution 10/2, the Forum decided that the 2015 review would include consideration of the following six elements:

(a) Past performance of the Forum and its processes, including ad hoc expert groups and country-led initiatives, in addition to future options for the Forum;

(b) The non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and other options referenced in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/49, including progress towards achieving the four global objectives on forests, which should include a review of the relationship of the instrument with international conventions that have a bearing on the mandate of the Forum;

(c) The Forum secretariat;

(d) Both the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its contribution to the work of the Forum and related activities by individual member organizations of the Partnership in support of the Forum;

(e) Means of implementation of the non-legally binding instrument and relevant subsequent resolutions, and the facilitative process in this regard;

(f) The Forum within the context of the United Nations sustainable development framework, including the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the post-2015 development agenda.

7. Member States also agreed to undertake several intersessional activities in preparing for the Forum's eleventh session. The first component of the intersessional activities entailed a solicitation of views from Member States and other relevant international arrangement on forests stakeholders. Two rounds of views were solicited which were compiled and considered at the first and second meetings of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests.[3]

8. The second component of the intersessional activities on the international arrangement on forests was the conduct of an independent assessment of the international arrangement on forests.[4] Five independent consultants carried out the assessment, including the report thereon, whose preparation required one year of work. The report was officially submitted to the Ad Hoc Expert Group at its second meeting.

9. The independent assessment was mandated to provide assistance and information to the Ad Hoc Expert Group in preparation for the eleventh session of the Forum. The assessment analysed the achievements, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, as well as the impacts of the Forum's work and the sustainability of its actions. The assessment further provided views and conclusions on the international arrangement on forests, considered a full range of options for the future arrangement, and suggested preferred options for the post-2015 arrangement.[5]

[3] All views are available from: http://www.un.org/esa/forests/IAF_submissions.html.

[4] The report is available from http://www.un.org/esa/forests/iaf-assessment.html.

[5] See http://www.un.org/esa/forests/iaf-assessment.html.

10. This report was the result of the intensive work of a group of independent consultants representing each of the United Nations regional groups, whose work was facilitated by the two Bureau-appointed co-facilitators. The report was finalized and released in September 2014.

11. The third component of the intersessional activities was the establishment of the Ad Hoc Expert Group. The participants at the first meeting of the Expert Group, which was held in Nairobi from 24 to 28 February 2014, reviewed and discussed the strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement of the current arrangement, and provided a number of suggestions for the future arrangement after 2015.[6]

12. The participants at the second meeting of the Expert Group reviewed and considered all inputs, including the independent assessment report on the international arrangement on forests, the second round of views from Governments and other stakeholders on the arrangement, and the outcome of the China-led workshop initiative on the arrangement beyond 2015 (Beijing, 29-31 October 2014), and discussed actions and options for the future arrangement. The report of the second meeting of the Expert Group includes a summary of the discussions by the Co-Chairs, as well as a set of their recommendations, for submission to the Forum at its eleventh session, on the function and institutional arrangements for the international arrangement on forests for the period beyond 2015.[7]

13. Following the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group, Switzerland hosted a country-led initiative on forest governance and decentralization (see E/CN.18/2015/12). Nepal will also host a major group-led initiative on designing the modalities for securing the means of implementation. The outcomes of these initiatives are also inputs to the discussions at the Forum's eleventh session.

III. Review of the effectiveness of the current international arrangement on forests

14. The intersessional work on the review of the international arrangement on forests indicates that the current arrangement has successfully raised the profile of forests in the global development agenda and influenced international policy agreements on forests in other forums.

15. For example, the impact of the work of the Forum has been visible in other forest-related intergovernmental bodies and processes, as well as sustainable development summits. The section on forests of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), adopted in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, reflects almost in its entirety the ministerial declaration adopted by the Forum at its second session (see E/2002/42, chap. II.B).

16. Since 2005, over 112 references to the Forum and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests have been made in the documents and decisions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the International Tropical Timber Organization

[6] See the report of the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests (E/CN.18/2015/10).

[7] See document E/CN.18/2015/11. Available from http://www.un.org/esa/forests/adhoc.html.

(ITTO) and documents and decisions issued under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.[8] As a concrete example, GEF fully supports the definition of sustainable forest management set out in the non-legally binding instrument and created its incentive programme on sustainable forest management/Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) in the fifth replenishment period of the GEF Trust Fund. As a positive step towards responding to the invitation by the Forum at its tenth session, GEF, under the sixth replenishment, the incentive programme on SFM/REDD+ became the incentive programme on Sustainable Forest Management.[9] In another instance, the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD Programme) promoted partnerships with the Forum as a key player on forest policy and financing for forests. This, among other activities, includes incorporation of the non-legally binding instrument in its five-year strategy.[10]

17. The adoption of the non-legally binding instrument and the four shared global objectives on forests by the Forum is another significant achievement. This instrument, which was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/98 on 17 December 2007, has contributed to promoting a universal and common understanding and approach to sustainable forest management worldwide.

18. Raising awareness on the importance of forests to sustainable development has been a key focus of the International Year of Forests, and the International Day of Forests, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/200 of 21 December 2012.

19. The section on forests of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex), drew mainly from the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment adopted by the Forum at its ninth session (see E/2011/42, chap. I.A, draft decision I). In the same vein, the Forum was successful in elevating the position of forests in the broader development agenda, along with the inclusion of forest-related targets in the proposed sustainable development goals.

20. In addition to raising awareness, strengthening political commitment and elevating the role of forests in the global development agenda, the Forum carried out major analytical work in critical areas of forest financing, forests in a changing environment, forest for people, forest and economic development, forests and poverty eradication, and monitoring, assessment and reporting. This analytical work also promoted a better understanding of the complexities and interconnectivity of

[8] Inception report of the Independent Assessment of the International Arrangement on Forests. Available from http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/iaf/IAF-Inception-Report-Feb2014.pdf.

[9] GEF-5 Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)/REDD-PLUS Strategy is available from https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/document/GEF-5_SFM_strategy.pdf; the GEF-6 Sustainable Forest Management Strategy is available from http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/publication/GEF_Forests-2014.pdf.

[10] UN-REDD Programme 2011-2015 Strategy is available from http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=4598&Itemid=53.

issues, thus paving the way for Member States to achieve substantive agreements in some of these areas, e.g., through the establishment of the facilitative process.

21. The capacity-building work of the Forum's facilitative process in helping to address the forest financing needs of countries has been another positive contribution. Many of these activities supported to date have relied on effective cooperation and collaboration among regional and international forest-related organizations, particularly through the Collaborative partnership on Forests.

22. While acknowledging these achievements, the deliberations and outcomes of the intersessional work highlighted the fact that there is still a long way to go towards fully achieving the potential of the Forum and the international arrangement on forests. The success achieved thus far was not considered sufficient, and stakeholders emphasized that there was room for changing and improving the current arrangement. Countries and other stakeholders noted that the future international arrangement on forests should build on its successes and take further steps to address the challenges associated with forests and sustainable forest management. Further details are provided in the following sections.

IV. 2015: a critical year for shaping a shared vision and a shared agenda for a shared future

23. The year 2015 offers a unique opportunity for global leaders and peoples to agree on measures and means to end poverty, and transform the world to better meet human needs and address the necessities of economic transformation, while protecting our environment, ensuring peace and realizing human rights.

24. The international community is at a historic crossroads, and the direction it takes will determine whether it will succeed in making good on its promises or fail. In its quest to shape a global sustainable development agenda for the years beyond 2015, the international community has embarked upon an unprecedented process.

25. Three high-level international meetings in 2015 will provide the opportunity to chart a new era of sustainable development: the third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be held in Addis Ababa in July; the summit at the level of Heads of State and Government for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, which will be held in New York in September; and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held in Paris in December. The cornerstone for the current global process of renewal was established in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, with the adoption of the above-mentioned outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The document described the lessons learned from two decades of development experience, and provided an extensive assessment of the progress and gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

26. In a series of structured dialogues on technology in the General Assembly, possible arrangements were considered for a facilitation mechanism for promoting the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies.

27. The report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, on options for an effective sustainable development financing strategy, was issued in August 2014. The Committee proposed a basket of more than 100 options for policy-makers, together with recommendations for a global partnership that encompasses key aspects of aid, trade, debt, taxation and financial market stability. It recommended individual, country-owned financing strategies, rooted in enabling national policy environments, and complemented by a reformed international enabling environment. It recognized that all sources of financing would need to be employed — public and private, national and international.

28. Throughout 2014, the President of the General Assembly convened a series of valuable gatherings. These included three high-level events: on the contributions of women, youth and civil society; on human rights and the rule of law; and on the contributions of North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, and information and communications technologies (ICT) for development. Three thematic debates were held: on the role of partnerships, on ensuring stable and peaceful societies, and on water, sanitation and sustainable energy. These were followed by an interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on elements for a monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda, and a dialogue in each region under the auspices of the respective regional commissions. In September 2014, the President of the Assembly convened a High-level Stocktaking Event on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

29. Importantly, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals delivered the results of its deliberations in July 2014. After more than a year of inclusive and intensive deliberations, the Group proposed 17 specific goals with 169 associated targets. Forests, which now feature prominently in the proposed goals, are addressed directly under two of them, namely, goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all) and goal 15, which refers to sustainable forest management in its title (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss) (see A/68/970 and Corr.1 and Add.1). There is one forest-related target under goal 6 and several targets thereon under goal 15. All but one of the targets under goal 15 relate directly to forests, whether or not "forests" is explicitly mentioned in the target. Four targets include an explicit reference to forests.[11]

30. Finally, the 2014 November report of the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, entitled "A world that counts: mobilising the data revolution for sustainable development",

[11] Target 6.6: By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.
Target 15.1: By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.
Target 15.2: By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests, and increase afforestation and reforestation by x per cent globally.
Target 15.b: Mobilize significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation.

called for the closing of key data gaps, between developed and developing countries, between information-rich and information-poor people, and between the private and public sectors. The Advisory Group underscored the importance of increasing access to quality data, remedying inequalities in the areas of access to information, data literacy, promoting civic space and enhancing the sharing of data and information; and called for the strengthening of national institutions to enable provision of capacities for statistics and the interface with new technologies.

31. These major developments are taking place at the time when the current international arrangement on forests is being reviewed by the Forum, which, as noted above, will decide on the future of the arrangement at its eleventh session in May 2015. The session will provide a unique opportunity for Member States to convey their vision of how to integrate the full spectrum of forests' contributions within the broader development agenda, as well as demonstrate their solid commitment to a strong arrangement beyond 2015.

V. The future international arrangement on forests we want

32. Reviewing the suggestions emanating from the intersessional activities on the international arrangement on forests indicates that there is an unprecedented positive basis for the Forum's decision on establishing a solid arrangement for the period beyond 2015. While there are issues, such as the adoption of a legally binding instrument on forests and the establishment of a global forest fund, regarding which divergent views continue to be held, the deliberations, and inputs provided, during the intersessional period highlight the fact that the commonalities among countries on the way forward towards the post-2015 international arrangement on forests are greater than at any time before.

33. There appears to be a general view among Governments and other key stakeholders that "business as usual" is not acceptable. The current arrangement should be strengthened, including through better facilitating the implementation of sustainable forest management, existing strengths should be built upon and learning should be derived from past experience. There is also a general agreement on the need to integrate forests, sustainable forest management and the future arrangement in the development agenda beyond 2015, as approved by the General Assembly, and to improve coherence in the work of forest-related organizations. Sustainable management of all types of forests has the potential to be the objective of the future international arrangement on forests and could guide the arrangement and its components beyond 2015.

34. In essence, the future international arrangement on forests should make a real impact and be strengthened in regard to: (a) catalysing implementation and financing of sustainable forest management; (b) integrating the future arrangement in the broader development agenda beyond 2015, as approved by the General Assembly; and (c) strategic planning and fostering collaboration and participation.

A. Catalysing implementation of and financing for sustainable forest management

35. There have been repeated calls throughout the intersessional period fora future international arrangement on forests that effectively advances implementation of and catalyses financing for sustainable forest management, and makes a real impact on the policies and measures related to all types of forests at all levels. So far, the Forum has been the main global body for policy discussion, and has provided policy guidance on sustainable forest management and on issues related to all types of forests. The Forum's role as a global policy platform is well recognized and has been increasingly accepted by various partners, although there is still the need to make further efforts to elevate the recognition of this role by the broad spectrum of stakeholders.

36. It is not possible to completely limit the role of the future Forum to policy debate or policy dialogue, and separate that role from a catalytic one. Holding policy dialogue in a vacuum, without orienting the discussions towards addressing the real needs of stakeholders in regard to implementation, could not be considered an effective means to achieve the objective of the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015. Indeed, the policy dialogue of the Forum would be highly effective and acceptable if informed by a consideration of challenges, lessons learned and opportunities in regard to implementation.

37. The catalytic role of the Forum, particularly through its Facilitative Process, with regard to mobilizing financing for forests and enhancing access to the existing funds, could also be further strengthened. Indeed, catalysing the implementation of and financing for sustainable forest management and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests already figures among the functions of the Facilitative Process.[12] Moreover, it would be beneficial for these aspects to receive more attention in the context of defining the future work of the Forum, as the focus of the Forum's discussion in the past has been mainly on negotiation of various texts.

38. Emphasis on the catalytic role of the Forum in regard to implementation would not make the future Forum an implementing agency. On the contrary, linking global policy debate to implementation and financing could usefully contribute to the work of the implementing agencies at national and international levels and help inform them of the needs, challenges and opportunities in regard to implementation of sustainable forest management and the non-legally binding instrument.

39. Multiple actions involving various stakeholders should be undertaken to catalyse implementation and financing in the context of the future international arrangement on forests. These would include strengthening institutions and the framework of actions. The following sections examine some of these actions.

The non-legally binding instrument beyond 2015

40. There is a clear-cut need to have a comprehensive and coherent framework for action that helps guide the actions of countries and other stakeholders towards sustainable management of all types of forests and that strengthens political

[12] See the report of the Forum on the special session of the ninth session (E/2009/118-E/CN.18/SS/2009/2).

commitment to this end. The non-legally binding instrument provides such a framework. The forest instrument is the only agreement on sustainable management of all types of forests that has ever been adopted by the General Assembly. It provides a comprehensive framework of actions towards achieving sustainable forest management, includes a definition of sustainable forest management and considers seven thematic elements as providing a reference framework for sustainable forest management.

41. The outcomes of intersessional activities — including the summary of the Co-Chairs (available from http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/aheg/IAF/Supplementary_info_AHEG1_Nairobi_report.pdf) annexed to the report of the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests (E/CN.18/2015/10), the international arrangement on forests independent assessment report and the summary of the Co-Chairs of the discussions held at the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group — recognized the adoption of the forest instrument as a major and significant achievement of the current arrangement, whose implementation should be further strengthened. It was also recognized that the instrument needs to be updated to reflect significant forest-related developments since its adoption by the Forum in 2007, such as REDD+ and the Aichi biodiversity targets. Most importantly, forest-related targets as proposed in the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, if approved by the General Assembly[13] could be integrated into the forest instrument and its global objectives on forests, in the process of updating the instrument.

42. There are other areas that Member States may wish to consider in the process of updating the forest instrument, including the timeline of the global objectives on forests, which currently extends to 2015, and the name of the instrument.

43. In ensuring a more sustainable solution for addressing the financing needs of the future international arrangement on forests, Member States may also wish to consider inviting one or more of the existing multilateral financing institutions to act as a financial mechanism for implementation of the updated forest instrument.

The future United Nations Forum on Forests

44. The Forum has a unique mandate, a unique composition and a unique location in the heart of the headquarters of global diplomacy. It goes without saying that the success or failure of the Forum directly depends on the actions taken by the members of the Forum, individually and/or collectively. Regardless of whether Member States decide to rename the United Nations Forum on Forests the United Nations Forest Assembly or, instead, to keep the current name of the Forum, the future Forum should be renewed so as to more efficiently perform its main roles with regard to policy dialogue and policy advice, and promoting collaboration and coordination with other forest-related forums, as well as catalysing implementation of and financing for sustainable forest management.

45. In the context of the future international arrangement on forests, in particular, the future Forum should aim at promoting sustainable management of all types of forests for the benefit of the current and future generations, and further strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. The renewed Forum could help play a

[13] See document A/68/970.

stewardship role in respect of sustainable forest management in the global development agenda owing to its universal membership, comprehensive mandate on forests, and political visibility at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The structure of the future sessions of the Forum may also need to be redesigned so as to enable it to attract key stakeholders in sustainable forest management implementation, especially the private sector, to share lessons learned from Member States, and to reduce negotiations.

Strengthening political commitment to sustainable forest management

46. The future Forum should continue to strengthen political commitment to sustainable management of all types of forests and to raise awareness on the multiple benefits of forests for sustainable development. These are the responsibilities of all components of the future international arrangement on forests. There are a number of options available for advancing these objectives in the work of the future Forum. The international arrangement on forests independent assessment report includes a proposal that the Secretary-General appoint a special envoy on forests. The Bureau of the Forum also has a huge potential for raising awareness on the multiple benefits of forests, in interacting with other organizations and processes, and for elevating political significance of forests at the global level. Indeed, many of the suggested roles and functions of the special envoy on forests could be performed by the Bureau of the Forum and, in particular, by its Chair. The Bureau also has significant potential to promote coherence and collaboration among all forest-related organizations and conventions.

Forum Committee on Implementation

47. The intersessional consultations on the international arrangement on forests highlighted the fact that there has been no dedicated standing mechanism or arrangement under the Forum to systematically monitor and review the progress in the implementation of sustainable forest management and the forest instrument, as well as the past decisions of the Forum in regard to catalysing the implementation of financing for sustainable forest management. The Forum continued to make policy decisions without having any means to assess progress and address problems.

48. To address this gap, the outcomes of the intersessional consultations, including those reflected in the aforementioned summaries of the Co-Chairs and the independent assessment highlighted that it would also be beneficial to set up a standing body on implementation, under the future Forum, to meet intersessionally and to monitor and review the progress in implementation, and financing for implementation, of the updated forest instrument under the integrated framework referred to in paragraph 40 above. Such a body, if established, could review the previous decisions of the Forum on these matters and provide recommendations to the Forum, for appropriate action, on issues related to implementation and financing. Monitoring, assessment and reporting could also be part of the mandate of such a mechanism.

Strategic trust fund

49. The outcomes of the intersessional consultations also considered that establishing a voluntary strategic *trust fund, under the Forum Trust Fund, would*

also be a positive step forward.[14] This strategic trust fund, if established, could fund the activities of an upgraded Facilitative Process, in respect of the performance of its 10 functions[15] and its potential new functions. The overall objective of this strategic fund could be to strengthen the capacity of countries to implement the updated forest instrument under the integrated framework referred to in paragraph 40, including through helping them to develop national action plans, and programmes and projects designed to mobilize further resources for the implementation of sustainable forest management.

Upgraded Facilitative Process of the Forum

50. In the same vein, the intersessional consultations also considered the potential for the Facilitative Process of the Forum to be further strengthened and even upgraded[16] to, for instance, a sustainable forest management facilitative mechanism under the Forum. Other possible names for the upgraded Forum Facilitative Process include the global forest facility and the United Nations Forum on Forests forest facility. This necessary upgrade would consist in a renewal of efforts to enable the Facilitative Process to perform all of its 10 functions, and to support countries in building capacity in the areas of implementation, effective resource mobilization, and exchange and dissemination of best practices and examples for governance and forest law enforcement. Specifically, the upgraded Facilitative Process could provide help to countries, including through assisting them to formulate programmes and projects to access to the existing funds and resources related to forests.

51. In addition to these substantive and institutional changes, Member States may also wish to identify and take decisions on further ways and means to help the forest sector to access existing resources within various processes and mechanisms such as REDD+, the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund, nationally appropriate mitigation actions, and low-emissions development strategies, among others.

Secretariat

52. The secretariat of the Forum, in spite of its small size, limitations in terms of budgetary and human resources, and significantly increased mandates, has, in the last 15 years, done its best to perform its functions and support the work of the Forum, Member States and other stakeholders, within existing resources and with no major change in terms of budget and staff. It has made significant contributions, not only in servicing the Forum and its members, but also in helping and connecting to relevant stakeholders, in elevating the role of forests in various global processes, and in working with other parts of the United Nations system in advancing the

[14] See sect. XII of the report on the second meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests (E/CN.18/2015/11), containing the recommendations of the Co-Chairs on the future of the international arrangement on forests.

[15] The 10 functions of the Facilitative Process are included in the resolutions adopted by the Forum at the special session of its ninth session (see E/2009/118-E/CN.18/SS/2009/2, chap. I.B) and its ninth session (see E/2011/42).

[16] See para. 78 (b) of the Summary of the Co-Chairs attached to the report of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on its first meeting (E/CN.18/2015/10), the independent assessment report, the summary report of the Co-Chairs of the workshop on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, Beijing, 29-31 October 2014 (E/CN.18/2015/9, annex) and sect. XII of E/CN.18/2015/11.

objectives of the future international arrangement on forests, in the context of the ongoing consultations on the development agenda beyond 2015.

53. The outcomes of the intersessional consultations emphasize that a solid and strong arrangement beyond 2015 cannot be achieved without strengthening the Forum's secretariat, based in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, including through identification of its priority areas of work and allocating adequate resources to the secretariat which are commensurate with the requirements of the functions assigned to it for the period beyond 2015. To this end, the outcomes of the intersessional consultations have called for the Forum secretariat to be equipped with increased human and financial resources, including from the regular budget of the United Nations, so as to enable it to perform its various functions efficiently and effectively.[17]

Future Collaborative Partnership on Forests

54. One of the suggestions in the independent assessment report is that UN-Forests be established as a substitute for or in parallel to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. It seems that this suggestion is to make the current Partnership a more formalized body in support of the work of the future international arrangement, including in the area of science and policy interface. Regardless of the name, it is important for the future Partnership to be refocused so as to support the work of the Forum, and enhance cooperation and coordination on forest issues. The refocused Partnership could receive more detailed guidance from the Forum in regard to its priorities and responsibilities, as well as the institutional arrangement and working modalities. This will help the future Partnership to work more collaboratively so as to leverage the expertise and capacities of its member organizations.[18]

B. Integrating the future international arrangement on forests in the broader development agenda beyond 2015

55. Inclusion of specific forest-related targets under two goals proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and referring to the multifunctionality of forests as a significant development, will certainly be important elements which, as such, should be integrated into the design of the future international arrangement on forests. The forest related-targets under goals 6 and 15 could be integrated into the updated forest instrument and its global objective on forests.

56. The Forum, as the only universal intergovernmental policy forum on forests, is in a unique position to monitor progress in implementation of forest-related goals and targets such as those proposed by the Open Working Group. In this regard, it is critical that implementation, monitoring, assessment and reporting in respect of the updated forest instrument and any forest-related outcome of the establishment of the post-2015 development agenda as approved by the General Assembly, be regarded

[17] See para. 78 (b) of the Summary of the Co-Chairs attached to document E/CN.18/2015/10, paras. 61-10, 62-13 and 62-18 of the international arrangement on forests independent assessment, and sect. XII of E/CN.18/2015/11.

[18] Further views on the future Partnership are contained in document E/CN.18/2015/7.

as the main mission of the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, and, in particular, of the future Forum.

57. To this end, Member States could usefully recommend a specific role for the future Forum, in regard to monitoring and assessment of, and reporting on, the implementation of any forest-related outcome in respect of the post-2015 development agenda, as approved by the General Assembly, to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development). In this way, the future international arrangement would be able to serve as the conduit from the forest community to the broader sustainable development discussions, and to the High-level Political Forum.

58. If Member States at the eleventh session of the Forum establish a framework agreement on the issues outlined in this report, further elaboration of some of the details, such as the updating of the forest instrument, can be effected in the intersessional period, after the summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to held in September 2015, and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December 2015. In this manner, full coherence with the outcomes of the summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties will be assured.

C. Strategic planning and fostering collaboration and participation

A strategic plan/United Nations forest programme

59. A strong and effective arrangement on forests beyond 2015 is contingent upon the development of a strategic plan. The need for developing a strategic plan for the future arrangement was also emphasized in the intersessional consultations.[19] Such a strategic plan could be developed to guide and focus the work of the international arrangement and its components beyond 2015, with an overall timeline of 2030, and provide an overall framework for action directed towards achieving the objectives of the future arrangement. Such a strategic plan would guide the development of shorter workplans and work programmes and could be further elaborated so as to form the core of an eventual United Nations forest programme.

Participation and involvement in the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015

60. Participation and involvement of a broad range of stakeholders should continue to be promoted in the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015. The post-2015 arrangement could effectively enhance its linkages and connections with the existing regional and subregional organizations, processes and mechanisms with a view to providing platforms for regional cooperation and coordination on the implementation of sustainable forest management. The linkages and connections could also be strengthened through interregional, cross-regional and thematic cooperation and coordination.

61. The Forum should craft a new vision and mechanisms for enhancing participation of stakeholders in the work of the international arrangement on forests

[19] See para. 78 (b) of the Summary of the Co-Chairs attached to document E/CN.18/2015/10; the independent assessment report; E/CN.18/2015/9, annex; and sect. XII of E/CN.18/2015/11.

beyond 2015. This should include a wider spectrum of stakeholders, one that extends beyond the limits of the status quo (which currently encompasses only some major groups), so as to include, inter alia, civil society, the private sector, local communities and foundations. However, such participation should not necessarily be limited to formal sessions of the future Forum: other options, entailing, for example, time devoted to participation in a partnership forum during the course of the Forum session, can be considered.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations[20]

62. In 2015, the international community is at a critical crossroads with respect to shaping a shared development agenda. As it emerges, the new agenda promises to be ambitious and transformative.

63. The current review of and decision on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 creates a timely opportunity for the Member States participating in the work of the Forum to devise a strong and solid arrangement for the period beyond 2015, to influence the ongoing post-2015 development agenda negotiations, and to proactively integrate forests and the arrangement into the broader global development agenda, with a timeline aligned to the post-2015 development agenda, as approved by the General Assembly.

64. A strong ministerial declaration and a solid resolution on the future arrangement emanating from the Forum's eleventh session will positively impact the negotiation on the draft outcome of the Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in September 2015. At the eleventh session, Member States should strengthen and devise a more effective, influential and proactive post-2015 arrangement, one that is tailored to addressing existing and emerging needs and demands, while building on the strengths of the current arrangement and lessons learned, addressing its weaknesses and improving its effectiveness.

65. The resolution on the arrangement adopted by the Forum at its eleventh session would provide the basis for the formulation of a framework agreement on the design, function and future direction of all components of the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, including measures on catalysing implementation and financing of sustainable forest management, integrating the future arrangement in the development agenda beyond 2015 as approved by the General Assembly, fostering strategic planning and participation, and ensuring sufficient resources for functioning of the future institutions of the international arrangement on forests.

66. In deciding on the nature of the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 at its eleventh session, the Forum may wish to:

[20] The conclusions and recommendations are mainly based on the outcomes of the intersessional consultations that were conducted during the last two years, in particular para. 78 (b) of the Summary of the Co-Chairs attached to document E/CN.18/2015/10, the international arrangement on forests independent assessment report, sect. XII of E/CN.18/2015/11, E/CN.18/2015/9, annex, the country-led initiative of Switzerland (see E/CN.18/2015/12) and the views solicited from Member States and other international arrangement stakeholders.

(a) Recognize the significance of all types of forests and trees for sustainable development among all peoples, and forests' and trees' contributions in respect of addressing complex and interconnected global challenges;

(b) Welcome the efforts undertaken by countries and other stakeholders in advancing sustainable management of all types of forests at the national, regional and international levels;

(c) Express concern about the continued loss of forest cover, and about both the lack of sufficient progress in implementation of policies that relate to sustainable management of all types of forests and trees and the fragmentation of those policies, and emphasize the role of the future arrangement in reversing these trends;

(d) Recall Economic and Council resolutions 2000/35 and 2006/49 and Forum resolutions 7/1 and 10/2, which provide the framework for the review of the current arrangement;

(e) Take note of the results of the preparatory process on the review of the effectiveness of the current international arrangement on forests, including the views of countries and stakeholders in the independent assessment report, and initiatives of countries and major groups, as well as the outcomes of the two meetings of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests;

(f) Recognize the achievements of the international arrangement on forests, lessons learned and shortcomings of the current arrangement, stressing that the future arrangement should build upon the strengths of the current arrangements and address its weaknesses;

(g) Acknowledge the developments in other forest-related policy-setting processes, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;

(h) Emphasize that the year 2015 offers a unique opportunity to integrate and position forests and the future arrangement in the broader context of the development agenda beyond 2015 as approved by the General Assembly;

(i) Stress that the future arrangement should be designed to effectively address the key challenges related to forests, policy-setting, implementation, mobilization of resources, and coordination and collaboration on sustainable management of all types of forests and trees;

(j) Highlight the importance of cross-sectoral approaches in addressing deforestation and enhancing the contributions of forests to sustainable development.

67. The Forum may also wish to consider:

(a) Extending the international arrangement on forests for the period 2015-2030, with the objective of promoting sustainable management of all types of forests and strengthening political commitment to this end;

(b) Developing a mission statement for the arrangement beyond 2015, focusing on implementation of the updated forest instrument, in which any forest-

related outcomes of the development agenda beyond 2015, as approved by the General Assembly in September 2015 summit, are integrated;

(c) Clarifying the functions of its core components (the future Forum, Member States participating in the work of the Forum, the Forum secretariat and its Facilitative Process, the Bureau of the Forum, the updated forest instrument, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, major groups and regional and subregional forest-related organizations and processes);

(d) Maintaining the universal membership of the future Forum as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council based in New York.

68. The Forum may further wish to consider:

Forum

(a) Holding biennial sessions of the future Forum;

(b) Ways to raise awareness on the multiple benefits of forests in various forums, to elevate the political significance of forests at the global level, and to foster collaboration and coherence within the work of the future Forum, for example. through giving an expanded role to the Chairs of future Bureaux of the Forum, or by other means to, inter alia:

(i) Enable attendance at the high-level segment of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and meetings of the governing bodies of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations, including meetings of the conferences of the parties to the Rio Conventions;

(ii) Hold regular meetings with the Chairs/Presidents of the governing bodies of Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations;

(c) Establishing a Forum committee on implementation to meet intersessionally in order to monitor, review and report on the progress in implementation of and financing for the updated forest instrument and to make recommendations thereon to the Forum;

(d) Ways to make the Forum sessions more participatory, attractive and conducive to the involvement of all stakeholders, including the private sector, and to also use the Forum's sessions to share lessons learned and scale up best practices;

Catalysing implementation and financing

(e) Establishing a voluntary strategic trust fund, under the Forum Trust Fund, to strengthen the capacity of countries in respect of implementing the updated forest instrument and achieving of the global objectives on forests and to fund an upgraded Facilitative Process;

(f) Reaffirming that the 10 functions of the Facilitative Process remain valid for the upgraded Facilitative Process;

(g) Upgrading the Facilitative Process to a sustainable forest management facilitative mechanism/global forest facility/United Nations Forum on Forests forest facility designed to perform the following additional functions of:

(i) Assisting countries in accessing financing from existing and emerging funds (e.g., GEF and the Green Climate fund (GCF)), including through the design of strategies, programmes and projects;

(ii) Also assisting countries in preparing national action plans for implementation of the updated forest instrument and to report on its implementation;

(iii) Identifying the gaps, obstacles and opportunities associated with private sources of financing for sustainable forest management as representing the largest category of forest financing, including through public-private partnerships and corporate social responsibility;

(h) Updating the forest instrument in regard to:

(i) Its title, so as to strengthen its visibility and implementation;

(ii) The timeline of the global objectives on forests;

(iii) Integration of the forest-related outcomes of the post-2015 development agenda as approved by the General Assembly, and the global objectives on forests in a coherent and complementary manner;

(iv) The linkages between the global objectives on forests and other forest-related developments that have occurred since 2007 (e.g., REDD+ and the Aichi biodiversity targets);

(i) Encouraging countries to refer to and make use of the updated forest instrument, as a holistic and overarching framework for operationalizing international initiatives and agreements focusing on specific aspects of forests (e.g., REDD+, the Aichi biodiversity targets, Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and payment for ecosystem services);

(j) Welcoming the GEF decision to devote a specific incentive programme to the sustainable forest management in its sixth replenishment period;

(k) Inviting GEF, in the context of its next replenishment period, to consider:

(i) Establishing a dedicated focal area to sustainable forest management;

(ii) Acting as a financial mechanism for implementation of the updated forest instrument;

(l) Integrating forest law enforcement and good governance at all levels as a priority of the future international arrangement on forests, and promoting collaboration with other United Nations entities to this end;

(m) Strengthening forest law enforcement and promoting good governance at all levels, in order to support sustainable forest management and eradicate illegal practices, in accordance with national legislation, policies and priorities;

Monitoring, assessment and reporting

(n) Synchronizing the cycle and modalities for national reporting to the future Forum on progress in the implementation of the updated forest instrument, including the global objectives on forests, with the five-year reporting cycle of the Global Forest Resources Assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and future reporting requirements on forest-related

outcomes of the post-2015 development agenda as approved by the General Assembly;

(o) Preparing, every five years, a substantive publication on progress in the implementation of the updated forest instrument, based on country reports submitted to the Forum, and information and data from relevant data sources;

(p) Addressing the existing gaps in forest data, especially by developing indicators on the socioeconomic aspects of forests, governance, and finance;

(q) Further improving methodology to better assess the full value of forest goods and services and their contribution to sustainable development;

(r) Formalizing collaboration on data collection, management, accessibility and sharing among the Forum, FAO and the International Tropical Timber Organization and under the Rio Conventions, in order to reduce the reporting burden on Member States, improve consistency of data and avoid overlaps;

(s) Consider establishing a global forest indicators partnership under the Forum to cover global-level forest-related reporting needs, to assist in reviewing the progress towards achieving sustainable forest management, and with the aim of integrating reporting on forests, while building on the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting;

Secretariat

(t) Taking appropriate decisions, as called for in the summary of the Co-Chairs annexed to the report of the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests, paragraphs 61-10, 62-13 and 62-18 of the independent assessment report on the international arrangement on forests, and section XII of the report of the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group, in regard to strengthening the secretariat of the Forum, based in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York;

Future Collaborative Partnership on Forests

(u) Strengthening the Partnership, including through providing concrete guidance on its future workplan and to ensure consistency with Forum priorities and its future strategic plan, and through contributing to the provision of adequate funding for the Partnership;

Regional cooperation and involvement of major groups

(v) Inviting regional entities to consider organizing meetings to facilitate discussion of regional matters related to the Forum agenda in those years in which the Forum does not hold session, and submitting their reports to the Forum Implementation Committee;

(w) Using regional Criteria and Indicator processes as a tool for implementation of Forum decisions and the international arrangement on forests strategic plan;

(x) Encouraging relevant regional entities, including the United Nations and FAO regional commissions, to support the work of the future Forum;

(y) Further collaborating with regional organizations as an efficient means of delivering assistance to Member States on forest financing issues;

(z) Organizing a one-day partnership forum in conjunction with the Forum's sessions, in which representatives from all stakeholders share their experiences and lessons learned in regard to implementation, financing and other issues related to sustainable forest management, and provide other inputs to the Forum;

(aa) Raising the profile of the Forum among the entities of the private sector, including through joint activities, their representation in official delegations to Forum sessions and intersessional activities and meetings;

(bb) Establishing thematic task forces/an advisory group as an additional mechanism for strengthening stakeholder engagement;

Integration in the development agenda beyond 2015, as approved by the General Assembly, and linkage to major processes

(cc) That the future Forum is the body tasked to monitor and assess the progress in implementation of the updated forest instrument, and the responsible body for reporting on forest-related outcomes of the establishment of the post-2015 development agenda, as approved by the General Assembly, to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development;

Strategic plan/United Nations forest programme

(dd) Developing a strategic plan/United Nations forest programme to guide the work of the future international arrangement on forests and its core component;

(ee) Operationalizing this plan/programme through shorter time-bound programmes of work, with required resources and flexibility, specifying priority areas and the roles and responsibilities of the core components of the future arrangement;

Post-eleventh session follow-up measures

(ff) Setting up a working group of the Forum, to work intersessionally in 2016, on submitting proposals to the Forum, inter alia, on the updated forest instrument and the strategic plan for the future arrangement;

(gg) Holding a special session of the Forum in 2017 to consider the conclusions of the Forum working group;

(hh) Deciding further that the five members of the Bureau of the special session of the Forum in 2017 should be nominated immediately after the eleventh session of the Forum to enable those members to guide the intersessional work leading up to the special session.